DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 415 780 HE 030 926

AUTHOR Lovette, Otis K.
TITLE Principalship Preparation Programs: The Principal's Perspective.
PUB DATE 1997-11-00
NOTE 18p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Mid-South Educational Research Association (Memphis, TN, November 12-14,1997).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research (143) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150) -- Tests/Questionnaires (160)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Administrator Attitudes; *Administrator Education; Course Content; *Curriculum Development; Curriculum Evaluation; *Education Courses; Elementary Secondary Education; Higher Education; Instructional Material Evaluation; Management Development; *Principals; Program Evaluation; *School Administration; Surveys
IDENTIFIERS *Louisiana

ABSTRACT

Practicing school principals were surveyed to determine their opinions regarding the most effective preparation curriculum for principals. A total of 100 Louisiana principals, drawn equally from elementary, middle or junior high, and high school, were given a survey instrument containing 52 course titles and asked to rank order the 12 courses they believed comprised the most effective principalship preparation curriculum. Results were compared with the current 30-hour curriculum for the preparation and certification of principals in Louisiana. Results show that obvious differences existed between the current curriculum and the rank-order list of top 12 courses. Several courses included on the present state certification list received very low rankings by the respondents--Educational Research, Philosophy of Education, and History of Education. Two courses Planning, Organizing, and Decision Making and the Psychology of Instruction and Learning--that appeared in the top 12 had no comparable courses in the present state list. Discussions with practicing school principals indicated that many principals believed that courses such as research, history, philosophy, and statistics were often taught with too much emphasis on theory and not enough on application. The principal survey and an item-by-item breakdown of responses and rankings are appended. (WD)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 415 780

PRINCIPALSHIP PREPARATION PROGRAMS:

THE

PRINCIPAL'S PERSPECTIVE

BY

DR. OTIS K. LOVETTE
ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR
EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP
NORTHEAST LOUISIANA UNIVERSITY

MID-SOUTH EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH ASSOCIATION
1997 ANNUAL MEETING
NOVEMBER 12-14
MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE

IR 030 926

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Principalship Preparation Programs:

The Principal's Perspective

Introduction

What graduate-level "courses" should comprise an appropriate/effective curriculum for preparing school principals? In the spring of 1997 a survey was conducted in Louisiana to determine the feelings of practicing school principals regarding courses which would comprise the most effective preparation curriculum for principals. The investigation was made in response to state and national concerns being expressed about the need for more appropriate training programs and quality control in existing programs. Generally the responsibility for preparing principals, and also other administrators, is shared by universities, state licensing agencies, professional organizations, and even school districts. Much of the time state licensing agencies lead in the development and implementation of new preparation standards or programs. Recently, summer of 1997, a task force (School Leadership Development Task Force) was authorized by the Louisiana Legislature (R.S. 17:3765) to develop a comprehensive school leadership development plan. The legislation provided funding for the planning of a program for the training and development of existing school leaders as well as prospective school leaders. The Task Force was charged with developing such a plan within a four month period. (Mississippi recently took four years to restructure their leadership preparation program.) The overall objective was to develop and implement a program to train and develop administrators who would provide more effective leadership for schools and thus improve teaching and learning.

The National Association of Secondary School Principals has recommended that when planning and delivering systematic professional activities that all stakeholders should be involved.

Universities, specifically, should be involved in the design, delivery, and assessment of preservice preparation programs (National Association of Secondary School Principals, 1992). The Louisiana Council of Professors of Educational Administration, representing those who were charged with the preparation of school leaders in Louisiana, has worked since 1992 to improve the state curriculum for preparing school administrators. (The state curriculum for certification of school administrators had been in place since 1983.) State officials had been unresponsive to the initiatives presented by this group. The present study was conducted at the university level to provide input into the change process which was set in motion as a result of a change in leadership at the state level. A new Governor and a new State Superintendent of Education brought a new education agenda to the state which included reform in the preparation and professional development of school leaders. In addition to the survey material presented in this paper, a survey was also conducted (by university professors) of all superintendents in the state and professors teaching educational leadership courses, to determine what they felt comprised an appropriate/effective curriculum. All of these material have been presented to the Task Force.

Methodology

Subjects

This descriptive study included as subjects principals from the 64 parish school districts and 2 city school districts in Louisiana. An equal number of principals at each level, elementary, middle or junior high, and high school were surveyed. In addition to ranking items which might be part of a curriculum for principals, respondents were also asked to indicate number of years of experience as administrators and present assignments.

Instrument

The instrument used in the survey (Appendix A) was designed by Dr. Dawn Hardin of Northeast Louisiana University. Information regarding masters-level principalship programs was requested from departments of educational administration and supervision in 58 colleges and universities. A principalship preparation program course list was compiled from the information received. After each course was categorized and duplications were eliminated, the survey instrument was composed of the remaining 52 course titles. If any course could not be considered a clear duplication of another, it was included on the survey. Each principal responding was asked to rank order the 12 courses believed to comprise the most effective principalship preparation curriculum. They were asked to use "1" to represent the most important course and "12" to represent the least important course.

Procedure

The Louisiana School Directory was used to identify the potential respondents. The first school listed in each category (elementary, middle or junior high, and high) under each parish school system was selected, and that school's principal was mailed a survey and other materials. Each of the 198 principals surveyed received a cover letter explaining the purpose of the survey (Appendix B) and a stamped return envelope. The option of e-mailing the responses was also provided for those surveyed. Of the 108 responding (54%), 8 were not useable. Surveys returned were tallied and data was compiled showing total responses and the mean of responses on each item (Appendix C).

Results

Demographic data

The following shows the data collected relative to "Assignment Level" and "Years as Principal and/or Assistant."

Table I

Assignment Level

Elementary Principal	29
Middle School/Jr. High Principal	27
High School Principal	37
K-8	4
7-12	4
K-12	2
4-12	1
No response	4

Table II

Years as Principal and/or Assistant

0 - 5	28
6 - 10	25
11 - 15	26
16 - 20	9
21 - 25	4
26 - 30	1
31 - 35	3
No response	12

Prior to 1984 the requirement for certification as a principal in Louisiana was 9 specified hours in graduate level school administration courses. Beginning in 1984 the hours required for certification as a principal rose to 30. It should be noted that at least 17 and perhaps as many as 54 of those surveyed had served for a period long enough that their preparation might have been

on the old standard of 9 hours. Several respondents indicated that they had not taken the courses but they felt the titles indicated course material which would be important for the preparation of principals. Data provided by the Louisiana State Department of Education (1996-97) indicated that in excess of 60% of the principals (including both principals and assistants) in the state were certified under the old standard.

Results of tabulation

Table III shows the present required thirty hour curriculum for the preparation and certification of principals in Louisiana. The courses must all be graduate level courses and a candidate must hold a master's degree to be certified. Candidates must also hold a valid Type A Louisiana Teaching Certificate, have completed five or more years of classroom teaching, and have a score of 620 or higher on the Educational Administration and Supervision Area Exam of the National Teacher Exam. An internship or practicum is not required by the state but several universities have such a requirement at the master's level.

Table III

Louisiana Requirement for Principalship Certification

Foundations of Educational Administration or Theory of Educational Administration
Elementary School Principalship
Principles of Instructional Supervision
Educational Research
History or Philosophy of Education
Curriculum
School Law
School Finance
School Personnel Administration
School-Community Relations or School Facilities or Program Development and Evaluation

Table IV shows the respondents' rank ordering of the courses they felt would be appropriate for the certification/preparation of principals. The number of "Responses" shows the number of times the course was mentioned within the top 12 courses. The "Mean Ranking" is a measure of importance of the course relative to the others in terms of the top 12 ranking; thus a lower number in this column indicates greater importance for the course. In preparing the data for the table, the researcher grouped course title responses that appeared best related to the main course topic. Appendix C shows the complete listing of possible courses and includes frequency of response and mean ranking.

Table IV

Rank Ordering of Top 12 Courses by Principals

	Responses	Mean Ranking
Principalship	140	6.19
Curriculum	122	5.77
Foundations	106	6.71
School Personnel Administration	93	6.72
School Finance and Taxation	82	6.76
School Law	81	3.20
Planning Organizing and Decision Making	81	6.31
Supervision of Instruction	77	6.61
School Plant and Facilities	64	8.44
School and Community Relations	60	6.75
Internship	44	5.11
The Psychology of Instruction and Learning	35	7.29

Analysis

Obvious differences exist between the two lists presented. Several courses were included on the present state certification list which received very low rankings by the respondents. Only 3

respondents indicated the need for a research course. "Philosophy of Education" received only 7 combined responses and "History of Education" received only 10. Two areas or courses that appeared in the top 12 which have no comparable courses in the present state list were "Planning Organizing and Decision Making" and "The Psychology of Instruction and Learning." The "Planning" course received as many responses as did "School Law," even though the mean ranking was considerably higher, 6.31 compared with 3.20, which indicated less importance for the course. Five respondents indicated a need for statistics, which is often a part of a master's level curriculum. "Computer Applications in Educational Administration" did not make the top 12 rankings, but was number 13 with 29 responses and a 6.83 importance ranking.

The data gathered in the study will be useful to those persons within the state of Louisiana, specifically the Task Force, as possible changes in the curriculum required for principal certification are considered. It should be noted that the approach used in developing the instrument was worthwhile in that it produced a comprehensive listing of possible courses, but it also made it difficult to decide which titles related to or were the same as those used in Louisiana. As an example of the difficulty of analysis, the "Foundations of Educational Administration" title received only 10 choices with an importance ranking of 4.50. At least 8 of the other course titles appeared to be similar and were counted as being "this type of course." Other researchers might find that some of the course titles fit better under/with other major course titles or areas. If such grouping is not done, it would make it appear that a "foundations" course was not important in the curriculum for preparing school principals. Courses such as "School Law" and "Internship" generally have titles which do not lead to ambiguity when respondents are making their choices.

Discussion and Conclusions

In addition to the data gained from the survey, the researcher has often been in contact with practicing school principals. Discussions with these persons indicated that course titles are not as important as what is contained within the courses. Many, especially those who were trained "several" years ago, indicated that much of their course work in school administration was "not practical." Courses such as research, history, philosophy, and statistics were not perceived as being helpful to them in their role as principal and other courses were often taught with too much emphasis on theory and not enough application. It appears that universities and/or certification entities have not been very responsive to such criticism, and many of these courses and teaching methods remain today.

Effective schools research almost always identifies "Effective school leadership" as a major component of effective schools. Although it always seems laudable to look for ways to improve programs, especially a program which prepares school leaders, a question remains as to "what" needs "fixing" to make a/the program more effective. A question also arises as to how will we know if we have produced a more effective program, will student test scores rise? Unfortunately, much of the change, and present "restructuring," that takes place in education is without adequate research to support the direction or intensity of the change. Teachers and administrators also complain that often new methods, procedures, etc. are only allowed to be "tried" for a short time and everyone is so tired of changing every year or so that ownership for new changes and initiatives is difficult to obtain.

As a case in point, mentioned earlier was the fact that a large percentage of the practicing administrators in Louisiana were doing so with a limited preparation program. The change in

certification requirements, which was a considerable change, going from 9 hours to 30 hours, was undertaken to develop more effective principals. In addition, other rigorous in-service requirements were added to requirements for principals. Was the "new" program more effective than the old? If one were to compare scores over a period of years relative to the preparation programs for administrators, one would have to conclude that there is a positive correlation between improving/changing programs for administrator preparation and "poorer" performance by students on norm-referenced tests.

So what? Initiatives to improve education should be developed around needs identified by research and embraced by the profession and individual stakeholders to obtain ownership. Initiatives should well-planned, implemented in palatable doses, and sustained over a period of time so that effectiveness can be adequately assessed. The data obtained in this study represents "research" that should be used by decision-makers.

References

National Association of Secondary School Principals. (1992). Developing school leaders: A call for collaboration. A special report of the NASSP Consortium for the Performance-Based Preparation of Principals, Reston, VA: NASSP.

Appendix A

LOUISIANA PRINCIPAL SURVEY

I appreciate your cooperation in completing this survey. Please provide the demographic information and rank order the 12 courses that you believe would comprise the most effective principalship preparation curriculum. Use "1" to represent the most important course and "12" to represent the least important course of the curriculum, etc.

_____ Elementary Principal
_____ Middle School/ Jr. High Principal
_____ High School Principal

_____ Years as principal and/or asst. principal*
*include this year
_____ Parish or system

****

_____School Law

_____Collective Bargaining and Contract Administration

_____Management of Labor Relations in Education

_____Evaluation, Accountability, and Policy Analysis Models

_____Policy Formulation and Educational Decision-making

_____Educational Policies in a Political Context

_____Education, the Workforce, and Public Policy

_____Educational Statistics

_____Educational Research

_____Supervision in Elementary and Secondary Schools

_____Advanced Supervision

_____Social and Cultural Foundations of Education

_____Human Factors in Education

_____The Psychology of Instruction and Learning

_____Social Psychology in Education

_____Psychology of Classroom Interaction

_____Developmental Psychology

_____The Psychological Aspects of Leadership

_____The Sociological Aspects of Leadership

_____Sociology of Education

_____Education as a Moral Endeavor

_____Contemporary Philosophies of Education

_____Analysis of Educational Concepts

_____Seminar in Educational Classics

_____History of Education

_____School Finance and Taxation

_____School Personnel Administration

_____Business Administration of School Systems

_____Administration of Pupil Services in Education

_____School Auxiliary Services Management

_____Human Resources in Educational Organizations

_____Seminar in the Economics of Education

_____School Plant and Facilities

_____Elementary and Secondary Curriculum

_____Theory and Design of the Curriculum

_____Curriculum Planning

_____Computer Applications in Educational Administration

_____School and Community Relations

_____Multicultural Diversity and Educational Leadership

_____Anthropology of Education

_____Communications in Educational Leadership

_____Elementary and Secondary Principalship

_____Foundations of Educational Administration

_____Internship

_____Educational Leadership: The Individual

_____Organizational Theory and Behavior in Education

_____Theory and Practice of Educational Planning

_____Leadership Beyond the Classroom

_____Transition to Leadership

_____Planning, Organizing, and Decision-making

_____The Dynamics of Educational Organizations

_____Organizational Change in Education

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Appendix B

Northeast Louisiana University
College of Education
Department of Educational Leadership and Counseling
306 Strauss Hall
Monroe, Louisiana 71209-0230
(318) 342-1246
(318) 342-3131 Fax

April 2, 1997

Dear Principal:

Enclosed you will find a survey that is being conducted in all parish and city school systems in Louisiana. The survey is being conducted to determine what practitioners believe would comprise the most effective principalship preparation curriculum. Superintendents in each system have also been surveyed regarding their perceptions (using the same survey instrument).

We (the Louisiana Council of Professors of Educational Administration) feel that any changes in state certification requirements for school administrators should only be made after careful consideration of information provided by practicing administrators. One principal from a high school, a junior high/middle school, and an elementary school in your system was selected to receive the survey. We used the Louisiana School Directory and selected the first school listed in each category.

The information gained from the survey will be tabulated and used to develop recommendations for possible changes in the curriculum required for state certification. Your response is valuable to this effort. You should be able to complete the survey in 5-10 minutes. When it is completed please fax it to me at FAX: 318-342-3131 or mail it to me at the address below. Please try to complete and return the survey in the next 2-3 days so we can have the material tabulated and used this spring.

Thank you for your time and your very special efforts as a school principal.

Sincerely,

Dr. Otis K. LoVette, President
L.C.P.E.A.
306 Strauss Hall
Northeast Louisiana University
Monroe, LA 71209
(318)342-1251

A Member of the University of Louisiana System

Appendix C

Results of Tabulation

	Responses	Mean Ranking
Principalship	60	4.44
Evaluation, Accountability and Policy Analysis	42	6.71
Leadership Beyond the Classroom	19	9.16
Administration of Pupil Services in Educ.	19	7.11
	140	**6.19**
Elementary and Secondary Curric.	54	6.00
Curriculum Planning	52	5.38
Theory and Design of Curriculum	16	6.31
	122	**5.77**
Foundations of Ed. Admin.	10	4.50
Educational Leadership: the Individual	29	6.83
Communications in Educ. Leadership	28	6.36*
Transition to Leadership	9	7.11
Organizational Change in Educ.	8	8.00
Theory and Practice....	8	7.38
Analysis of Ed. Concepts	5	7.80
The Dynamics of Educ. Organizations	2	7.00
The Sociological Aspects of Leadership	7	7.17
	106	**6.71**

Appendix C (Cont.)

School Personnel Admin.	65	5.58
Ed. the Workforce and Public Policy	7	8.14
Col. Barg. And Contract Admin.	2	12.50
Mgmt. of Labor Relations	1	6.00
Human Factors in Education	11	7.00
Human Resources in Educ. Organizations	7	7.86
	93	**6.72**
School Finance and Taxation	59	6.78
Business Admin. of School Systems	21	6.33
Seminar in Economics	2	10.50
	82	**6.76**
School Law	**81**	**3.20**
Planning Organizing and Decision Making	57	5.96
Policy Formulation and Decision Making	18	6.50
Educational Policies in a Political Context	6	9.00
	81	**6.31**
Supervision	64	6.50
Advanced Supervision	13	7.15
	77	**6.61**
School Plant and Facilities	55	8.20
School Auxiliary Services Management	9	9.89
	64	**8.44**
School and Community Relations	**60**	**6.75**
Internship	**44**	**5.11**
The Psychology of Instruction and Learning	12	6.33
The Psychological Aspects of Leadership	9	7.89
Psychology of Classroom Interaction	6	8.50
Developmental Psychology	5	7.40
Social Psychology in Educ.	3	6.67
	35	**7.29**

Appendix C (Cont.)

Computer Applications in Educ. Admin.	**29**	**6.83**
Multi cultural Diversity and Educ. Leadership	**14**	**6.00**
History of Education	7	8.71
Social and Cultural Found. Of Education	3	3.00
	10	**7.00**
Statistics	**5**	**7.00**
Contemporary Philosophies of Education	4	5.50
Education as a Moral Endeavor	2	9.00
The Sociology of Education	1	6.00
	7	**6.57**
Educational Research	**3**	**6.67**
Seminar in Educational Classics	**0**	**0.00**

* Difficult to assign to an existing course title.